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MONTANA PROSPECTIVE PLANTINGS FOR 1952

A 2 percent decrease in total acreage of spring planted crops is in prospect for 1952. On March 1, Montana farmers and ranchers expressed their intentions to seed 5,956,000 acres to principal crops this spring, compared with plantings of 6,080,000 acres in 1951. If early plans are carried out, plantings of oats, barley and dry peas will be larger than last year, but these will not offset plans for smaller acreages of spring wheat, flaxseed, dry beans, sugar beets and potatoes. The rapid depletion of feed grain stocks and hay reserves resulting from record high cattle numbers and snowbound ranges the past winter are largely responsible for increased acreages of oats and barley and plans to harvest more hay this summer.

Acreages for individual crops may be altered considerably by spring weather conditions, the potential labor supply and to some extent, by the availability of cropland. Abandoned acreages of winter wheat will be reseeded primarily to spring wheat, oats or barley.

Soil moisture reserves from the past season's accumulation, combined with the winter's precipitation point to above normal subsoil moisture in virtually all sections of the State. Heavy snow cover at this time should provide sufficient moisture for seed germination and carry the crop well into the spring. However, the outcome of the new crop will be affected by the amount of precipitation during the growing season. Irrigation water supplies are plentiful. It now appears that field work will be retarded and may open two or three weeks later than normal, similar to the spring season of the past two years.

WHEAT: Prospective plantings of 4,631,000 acres of spring wheat are 3 percent less than the 4,774,000 acres seeded last year. Last fall, 1,725,000 acres were seeded to winter wheat which added to the expected spring wheat plantings total 6,356,000 acres of all wheat. This compares with 6,274,000 acres of gross seedings of all wheat in 1951, a 1.3 percent increase. Winter wheat abandonment is not expected to be heavy as the wheat has wintered well under good moisture and snow cover in the principal winter wheat areas.

FEED GRAINS: Farmers intend to increase their acreage of barley 6 percent, oats 3 percent and plan to raise about the same acreage of corn. If these intentions are fulfilled, the barley acreage will be 534,000 acres, oats 517,000 acres and corn 180,000 acres. The aggregate for these feed crops totals 1,231,000 acres compared with 1,186,000 acres in 1951. Such an acreage is needed with good yields to implement feed supplies in order to maintain present livestock numbers.

OTHER PLANTED CROPS: Sharp reductions are indicated for flaxseed, dry beans, sugar beets and potatoes. A flaxseed acreage of 30,000 acres compares with 47,000 acres planted in 1951. The dry bean acreage at 7,000 is 2,000 acres under last year. Prospective sugar beet plantings of 40,000 acres indicate an 18 percent reduction from the 49,000 acres planted last year. Plans for 9,100 acres of potatoes are 1,200 acres less than last year. Dry peas which are all grown under contract are placed at 8,000 acres, an increase of 3,000 acres.

MONTANA: PROSPECTIVE PLANTINGS FOR 1952

CROP	AVERAGE, 1941 - 50			ACRES PLANTED		
	Acres	Yield per Pl. Acre		1951	Indicated 1952 as %	
	Planted	Amount	Unit	1952	of 1951	
	(1,000 Acres)			(1,000 Acres)	(1,000 Acres)	(Percent)
Corn.....	199	15.4	Bu.	180	180	100
Spring wheat...	3,018	15.1	"	4,774	4,631	97
Oats.....	516	25.0	"	502	517	103
Barley.....	686	24.3	"	504	534	106
Flaxseed.....	219	6.3	"	47	30	64
Beans, dry.....	26	1,259	Lbs.	9	7	78
Peas, dry.....	27	1,141	"	5	8	160
Sugar beets....	72	10.7	Tons	49	40	82
Potatoes.....	15.9	152	Bu.	10.3	9.1	88
All hay 1/.....	2,183	1.17	Tons	2,219	2,374	107

1/ Data for hay relates to acres for harvest.

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(Over)

U. S. PROSPECTIVE PLANTINGS, MARCH 1952

Farmers' plans for the 1952 crop season indicate relatively small changes from 1951 acreages. The 271.8 million acres indicated as a total of the 16 crops now estimated in March, is about a million acres less than in 1951. For individual crops, however, the tendency is to shift from crops of high labor requirements to those of a less intensive nature. Weather during the spring planting season is always a major factor in changes in plans. Other significant changes may result from the Department's production program, when all the goals and allotments receive the individual farmers' consideration. Spring activities were mostly at the usual stages on March 1. Soil moisture is generally satisfactory, although in part of the Southwest it is only temporarily adequate. Irrigation water supplies generally promise to be the best in recent years. Reports from farmers show a general concern over farm labor supplies and this appears to be a limiting factor in plans for 1952 operations.

A limiting factor in the acreage available for seeding spring crops is the large acreage sown to winter wheat last fall and of which little has been abandoned to date. Cotton acreage is not covered in current reports by farmers, but the goal acreage is about the same as the large 1951 acreage. Farmers indicate a strong desire to retain and increase their hay and grassland acreage and to shift to less intensive types of farming. Current plans indicate decreases from 1951 acreages of spring wheat, mostly durum, of barley, flax, all sorghums, peanuts grown alone, dry beans and peas. Large increases are indicated for oats, soybeans and hay. Changes from 1951 acreages of corn, rice, potatoes, sweetpotatoes, tobacco and sugar beets are likely to be relatively small.

Comparisons of prospective plantings with 1952 goal or allotment acreages are possible for most such crops. Prospective acreages exceed the goals for only 5 crops -- all wheat by about 0.4 percent, oats by about 3 percent, soybeans for beans by nearly 6 percent, rice and hay each by 1 percent. But falling short of the goals are prospective acreages of corn by nearly 6 percent, barley by 24 percent, flax by 2 percent, all sorghums by nearly 12 percent, potatoes by 7 percent, sweetpotatoes by 29 percent, dry beans by nearly 13 percent. The prospective acreage of tobacco is slightly below the acreage computed as likely to produce the marketing quota. Similarly, for sugar beets the prospective acreage is about one-sixth less than the acreage which would produce the beet sugar quota. With feed production a major aim in the goals, the small excess for oats and hay is more than offset by shortages below goals for corn, barley and sorghums.

C R O P	P L A N T E D A C R E A G E S			
	Average	1951	Indicated	1952 as pct.
	1941-50	1951	1952	of 1951
		Thousands		Percent
Corn, all.....	88,379	83,866	83,928	100.1
All spring wheat.....	18,742	22,257	21,998	98.8
Durum.....	2,644	2,586	2,344	90.6
Other spring.....	16,098	19,671	19,654	99.9
Oats.....	43,968	41,594	42,818	102.9
Barley.....	13,986	10,840	9,752	90.0
Flaxseed.....	4,283	4,114	3,935	95.6
Rice.....	1,594	1,981	1,971	99.5
Sorghums for all purposes.....	15,260	15,113	13,442	88.9
Potatoes.....	2,457	1,379	1,373	99.6
Sweetpotatoes.....	632	316	334	105.4
Tobacco 1/.....	1,630	1,782	1,804	101.2
Beans, dry edible.....	1,991	1,523	1,414	92.8
Peas, dry field.....	504	323	267	82.7
Soybeans 2/.....	12,788	14,838	15,457	104.2
Peanuts 2/.....	3,649	2,593	2,158	83.2
Hay 1/.....	74,536	74,718	75,380	100.9
Sugar beets.....	833	759	747	98.4
1/ Acreage harvested. 2/ Grown alone for all purposes.				

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